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ABSTRACT

This document is the first of four in a series of guides to the government documents collection in the academic library at St. Mary's University (San Antonio, Texas); the library has been a selective depository for U.S. Government publications since 1964. The guide describes the document collection in general, including the nature of the collection, the use of Superintendent of Documents classification numbers to organize the collection, its location in the library, and various ways to access the collection. The points of access described are the public catalog; special indexes, i.e., Monthly Catalog, American Statistics Index, Congressional Information Service Index, and Index to U.S. Government Documents; and two special access aids--the Publications Reference File, a microfiche document that is updated bi-monthly, and Subject Bibliographies, a series of more than 300 lists of documents in different subject areas. (CGD)

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ACADEMIC LIBRARY GUIDE GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS SERIES NUMBER 1

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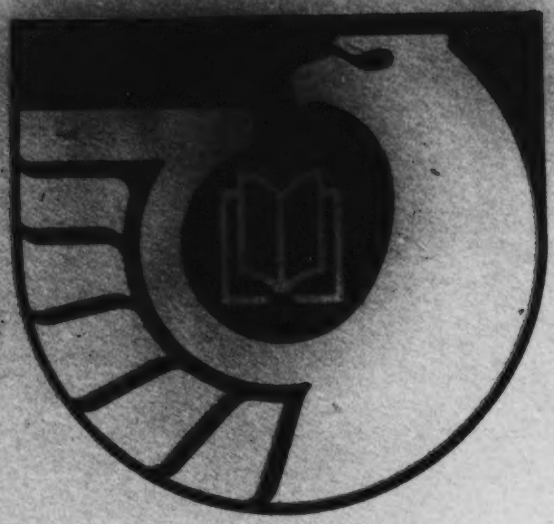

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GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
GUIDE TO ACCESS

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GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS---GUIDE TO ACCESS

The guide provides a general description of the Federal Documents Collection of the St. Mary's Academic Library, including its organization and locations. Also, the basic methods of access to the Collection are identified and explained. Other Guides in this series cover specialized access and individual sections of the Collection.

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I. Introduction

A. **Nature of the Collection**. St. Mary's University Academic Library has been a selective depository for U.S. government publications (or documents) since 1964. We select various categories of publications which are "deposited" here by the Government Printing Office. The printed output of almost every Federal agency is represented in the collection, but we have concentrated on publications from the Departments of Commerce, HEW/HHS (non-medical items), Labor and the Congressional Committees. Although most material in the Collection was published in the 1960's or later, we do have some older items. Unless a document is specifically marked for reference use only, it may be checked out by St. Mary's students, faculty or staff at the Circulation Counter.

B. **Classification**. The Federal Documents Collection is arranged by Superintendent of Documents classification numbers. These numbers are assigned in Washington and are used by most depository libraries. Each number consists of a letter identifying the issuing agency, followed by numbers and more letters to identify the specific publication. Because of this arrangement, all publications from an agency (or Congressional Committee) will be found together on the shelf or in the microfiche drawer. Unfortunately, however, this system does not guarantee that all documents dealing with a particular subject will be found together. In order to find documents on a subject of interest, you must use one of the indexes described below.

In addition, reorganizations within government agencies are reflected in changes of Superintendent of Documents numbers, thereby occasionally scattering publications of a particular office or bureau over time.

Browsing can indeed turn up useful publications quickly, if one is lucky. But it is not a reliable method of comprehensive research, especially in the Documents Collection.

C. **Location**. Most of the Federal documents are shelved opposite the Reference Collection on the main floor of the Library. However, since the late 1970's, increasing numbers of documents have been received in microfiche. These documents are filed (by Superintendent of Documents classification number) in cabinets near the Reference Desk, also on the main floor. In addition, selected government periodicals are shelved on the first floor with the regular Periodicals Collection. These periodicals are inter-filed with the non-government titles, in alphabetical order. One last location for documents is storage, where a few little-used, mostly older publications are kept. They may be retrieved and checked out on request.

Because it is possible that a documents may be located in the microfiche cabinet, in periodicals, or in storage, it is a good idea to check the Superintendent of Documents classification number obtained through the indexes (see section II below) in the Documents Shelf List file. This card file is kept near the Documents Indexes on the main floor of the Library. It is a file in classification number order of all Federal documents, with special locations noted when necessary.

II. Access to the Collection

A. **Public Catalog**. A very few documents, selected for their pertinence to topics of current interest, or for their anticipated future importance, are listed in the public catalog with the regular book collection. They are still shelved in the Documents Collection, and retain their Superintendent of Documents classification number. But they can be found in the catalog under any of the access points used to find books in the Library's collection.

B. **Indexes**. Most searches for documents, however, require the use of the Documents Indexes listed below, or some of the special tools described in section III.

1. **Monthly Catalog**. (1895--) This index is itself a document and is the standard index for Federal publications. Volumes for 1895-1934 are in microfilm on the first floor. Volumes for 1933 to the present are shelved in the Index Area of the main floor.

   Beginning with the July, 1976 issue, the Monthly Catalog format changed from that of earlier years. The following explanation will deal with the new format, since most users of documents need recent information. If you need to search the older volumes, ask a reference librarian for assistance.

   Even in the Monthly Catalog volumes published since 1964, you will find that the Library does not have all the publications listed. This is because we are a selective depository, and the Monthly Catalog is a complete index. It also includes some documents not available for depository selection. Documents not held at St. Mary's may be borrowed from other libraries through the usual inter-library loan procedure.

   Each monthly issue of the Monthly Catalog contains an entry section and an index section. The index section is usually the place to begin your search. There are five different indexes: Author (including agencies, committees, conferences, etc., as well as personal authors), Title, Subject, Series/Report Number, and Title/Keyword. Be sure you are using the index appropriate to your search. The Subject index

is the one most frequently used. Subject headings used here are the same as those found in the Public Catalog. Therefore, if you have found some useful books under a particular subject in the catalog, use the same subject headings in searching the Monthly Catalog. The Title/Keyword Index is an auxiliary subject index of sorts and should be used if you are looking for a "buzz word" subject, for example. Remember, however, that it only lists title words, and often the subject of a document is not expressed directly in the title.

If you have the author or title of a document, or its series number, use one of these indexes rather than the subject index.

If you cannot find a listing for the document you want in the Monthly Catalog for the year of its publication, try several subsequent years as well. There is often a delay between a document's publication and its inclusion in the Monthly Catalog.

2. **American Statistics Index (ASI)**. (1974--) This commercially produced index is a comprehensive guide to all Federal publications which contain statistics. And this subset of government documents is a large one.

Each monthly issue of ASI, and each annual cumulation, consists of two separate parts: the index and the abstract sections. The index section has two distinct subject listings. One is by subjects similar to those found in the Public Catalog and the Monthly Catalog. The second section is by category of statistical information and permits the identification of documents which contain lists of statistics grouped by such categories as cities, industries, age ranges, etc. For example, to find documents containing statistics on income levels in San Antonio, one should look both in the regular subject index under San Antonio and Income, and also in the geography category index, under "By Cities," and Income. Consult a reference librarian if you have trouble using ASI's special indexes.

The abstract section of ASI gives not only the usual bibliographic information and the Superintendent of Documents classification number, but also a brief descriptive abstract.

ASI, like the Monthly Catalog, includes some documents which our Library does not have. And it also includes some documents not available for depository selection at all. The only place these documents are available is at UTSA, in a collection supplied by the publishers of ASI. These publications are on microfiche and can be borrowed on inter-library loan. They can be identified in ASI's abstract

section because their citations do not contain Superintendent of Documents classification numbers.

3. **Congressional Information Service (CIS) Index**. (1970--) This index is published in the same format as ASI, but it covers only publications of Congressional committees. Its index volume consists largely of a regular alphabetical index of subjects and names. Some potentially useful supplementary indexes include bill numbers, report and document numbers, and committee and subcommittee chairmen.

   Prior to 1984, each annual abstract cumulation of CIS contains Legislative Histories. These listings are arranged by Public Law (P.L.) number and include CIS references for all publications dealing with the legislation as it wound its way through Congress. In 1984, CIS began publishing a separate annual volume of these Legislative Histories.

   Current publications listed in CIS without a Superintendent of Documents classification number cannot be found locally. The St. Mary's Law Library has a microfiche collection of these non-depository titles for some past years, as does UTSA.

4. **Index to U.S. Government Documents**. (1975--) This commercially produced index is a "Reader's Guide" for government periodicals. It indexes well over 100 of these publications, selected for inclusion on the basis of having substantive articles of potential value for research. Government periodicals consisting mostly of abstracts, press releases, etc., are not included.

   Most of the titles which the Library receives are shelved on the first floor, in alphabetical order with other periodicals. But a few titles are shelved in the Documents Collection, under their Superintendent of Documents classification numbers. The listing of titles near the beginning of each volume of the Index is marked to show the titles held by the library and their locations.

   The Index to U.S. Government Periodicals includes entries for names and subjects.

III. Additional Aids to Access

A. **Publications Reference File (PRF).** (Completely updated bi-monthly) This microfiche document is a "Books in Print" for publications available from the Government Printing Office (GPO) and is kept at the Reference Desk. If you want to order a copy of a government document, it is a necessary tool, since it gives price, stock number and other ordering information. .

However, using it simply as a cumulated Monthly Catalog entails certain risks. Some documents go out of print rather quickly, and so a fairly recent title may not appear in the PRF. Also, not all government documents are available for sale from GPO. Keeping these warnings in mind, the PRF can be a quick first place to check when searching for a recent document.

The PRF indexes by title, subject, stock number, series/report number and Superintendent of Documents number.

B. **Subject Bibliographies**. (updated continually) This series of booklets is shelved in the Documents Collection (GP 3.22/2:) and includes over 300 lists of documents in different subject areas. The publications listed are available for sale from GPO, and do not represent an exhaustive catalog of documents on the topics. But a Subject Bibliography is a good place to get started looking for documents. Some of the titles are annotated, and all citations include Superintendent of Documents numbers. Note that some titles may be received by this Library in microfiche, and some may not be held at all. Check the classification number in the Documents Shelflist to be sure.